

Chargé d’Affaires Thomas Navratil addresses the Marks Global Elections Day with MOST

February 5, 2009

Thank you to MOST for hosting this event today.

I congratulate MOST for the admirable job it has done in carrying out monitoring missions for elections in the Republic of Macedonia, and for all the many important projects it has done to promote democratic dialogue here.

MOST is an outstanding non-partisan civil society organization, and we appreciate their hard work and dedication to democracy in Macedonia over the years. We praise MOST’s leadership, and admire the dedication and service of the thousands of volunteers who have given their valuable time to election monitoring efforts.

Global Elections Day is an occasion to reflect on the meaning of elections. What are we doing when we go to a voting booth and choose a name from a list of candidates? Why is this important?

Probably each of us has our thoughts on this, but in sum, the act of choosing our political leaders and government administrators ourselves, through the voting process, is the essence of democracy. This is one of the most fundamental ways that citizens make their collective choices about the direction and character of their society.

The conduct of free and fair elections is what makes a country a democracy. I believe that the citizens of Macedonia overwhelmingly support democracy, believe in democracy, and want to live in a successful democracy.

The problems that we witnessed in the 2008 elections, and which ODIHR and the Macedonian media reported thoroughly, challenged Macedonia’s democracy. With its democratic hopes under pressure now, Macedonia’s elections this year are a critical moment for government authorities, political parties and candidates, the media, and – especially – voters to insist that Macedonia enjoy free and fair elections.

Macedonia deserves this.

And the United States, along with our partners in Europe, supports this goal in every way we can.

In our international relations, our diplomacy and our development assistance, we work every day in practical ways to support democracy in Macedonia. For example, we have supported MOST financially since 2004, and are providing US \$100,000 to support MOST’s election observation effort this year. The U.S. will join the OSCE and other friends of Macedonia to observe the elections and the campaign period as well.

We want to see Macedonia as a full member of the Euro-Atlantic community, a thriving, multi-ethnic state where all citizens have a fair chance to pursue their goals. Macedonia, like the United States, is a land of many cultures, and this diversity is our true wealth and our true strength. In America, we are now seeing the first practical effects of the choices we made in our elections in November and we are full of hope that, together, we will tackle our serious problems and emerge better off. All of us, in America, in Macedonia and throughout Europe, and around the world, want to pass to our children and our children’s children prosperous, democratic nations. Go for it, Macedonia!